



SCREENWRITING SEMINARS

3-5 Day Schedule

Three to five days of screenwriting instruction that incorporates such aspects as structure, dialogue, plot and adaptation.

Mark AXELROD

Three-Four Day Schedule

DAY 1

FROM ARISTOTLE TO ROCKY Introduction to the fundamentals of dramaturgy as presented by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Clips of "Rocky" and detailed discussion of first 15% of the film structure with allusions to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Then a comparative study of Stallone's original script of "Rocky" in relation to the final cut to see what modifications were made in order to improve the film. Discussion of such structural aspects as the *OPENING HOOK*, the *ARC*, and the *QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED* using clips to show the various aspects of each from "Citizen Kane," "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, & Her Lover," "Rain Man" & "Run Lola Run."

DAY 2

WHERE IS THIS PLOT GOING ANYWAY? development and its relationship to the notion of "the quest" using approaches by Joseph Campbell (*The Hero With a Thousand Faces*) and Northrop Frye (*Anatomy of Criticism*) with attention to the five main types of mythical movements associated with plot; namely, romantic comedy, romantic adventure, romantic quest, tragedy and satire. Associated with these movements we will screen and discuss excerpts from films such as: "4 Weddings and A Funeral," "Romancing the Stone," "The Fisher King," "The Name of the Rose," and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

DAY 3

LOOK WHOSE TALKING AND WHY. DIALOGUE is probably the least emphasized aspect though, arguably, the most important aspect in screenwriting. The reasons for this lack of attention are manifold, but the fact that it's an ignored topic is curious. Yet, there are techniques that one can rely on to write quality dialogue. Using extended clips from "The Graduate" and "Pulp Fiction" we will spend a considerable amount of time discussing the techniques involved in dialogue writing relying on both the final cut of the film and the final draft of the screenplays.

DAY 4

Day 4 could be an extension of Day 3 since Dialogue takes a long time. Or, I could begin something on film adaptation.

Five Day Schedule

DAY 1

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DAY 4

CHARACTER & CONFLICT. Extensive discussion of the relationship between character and conflict and an analysis of what constitutes good conflict vs. bad conflict with close analysis of films such as: “*Good Will Hunting*,” “*Driven*,” and “*Amelie*.” It is imperative that the student gain an understanding of what constitutes quality dramatic conflict and what does not. The films that have been selected offer that contrast.

DAY 5

I READ IT AT THE MOVIES. Discussion of adaptation with extended excerpts from “*Lolita*,” “*Death in Venice*” & “*Il Postino*.” This particular session involves a discussion of both the target texts and the adaptations and necessitates that the students have read the texts under discussion. Before any kind of an analysis of the adaptation process can be undertaken, a thorough understanding of the target text needs to be taken into consideration.

Mark Axelrod is a Professor of English at Chapman University, Orange, California. Prior to teaching at Chapman, he taught at the University of East Anglia, UK and the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. A graduate of both Indiana University (BA, MA) and the University of Minnesota (PhD), he is also the Director of the John Fowles Center for Creative Writing for which he has received 4 National Endowment Arts Grants. He is a two-time recipient of a United Kingdom Leverhulme Fellowship for Creative Writing (University of East Anglia, Edinburgh University), a three-time recipient of the Alliance Française National Writing Award, has written 17 works of fiction, published five, *Capital Castles* (Pacific Writers Press, 2000), *Cloud Castles* (Pacific Writers Press, 1998), *Cardboard Castles* (Pacific Writers Press, 1996) and *Bombay California* (Pacific Writers Press, 1994)) and *Borges' Travel, Hemingway's Garage* (fc2, 2005) which is slated for translation and publication by Thule Editorial, Barcelona, Spain.

His Pan-Euro-American trilogy titled, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Blase Kubash*, based on the character created by the 19th century Brazilian novelist, Machado de Assis, excerpts of which have been anthologized in *The Reading Room/4* published by Great Marsh Press is also slated for translation and publication in Brazil. He is also writing a tetralogy of short fictions, the first of which, *Borges' Travel, Hemingway's Garage* received excellent reviews in the New York Times, the Georgia Review and Publisher's Weekly, among others. The second volume, *Balzac's Coffee, DaVinci's Ristorante*, is completed and he has sketched two new collections, titled *Melville's Motors*, *Tolstoi's Train*, and *Rabelais' Hotel, Nietzsche's Café*. He has written other short fiction as well including *Dante's Foil & Other Sporting Tales* and *The Apotheosis of Aaron*. He has been published in numerous literary journals including the *Iowa Review* and the *New York Quarterly* and was a contributor to the former New York avant-garde magazine, *Splash*. Among the awards he has won for his fiction include: the Tim McGinnis Award (University of Iowa); Camargo Foundation Fellowship in Fiction Writing,

Cassis, France (2); the Maxwell Perkins Award for Fiction Writing, New York, NY; a Bush Foundation Fellowship for Fiction Writing, St. Paul, MN; and an Award for Experimental Writing (Indiana University). He has also won an award from Western Illinois University for his play, *Ti Amo Lucia Olivetti* and has completed a trilogy of new one-act plays titled: *Taxing Tales*, that includes: *Van Gogh's Audit*, *Superman in America* and *Bruno Arlt at the Grille Café*. He has translated three works: Xavier de Maistre's novella, *Un voyage autour de ma chambre*, Balzac's play, *Mercadet*, and Baudelaire's novella, *La Fanfarlo*. He is currently at work on a book of memoirs titled, *Posthumous Papers of a Living Writer* which includes essays from Beckett to Garrison Keillor, Letterman to August Wilson. His critical books include, *The Politics of Style in the Fiction of Balzac, Beckett and Cortázar* (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 1990); *The Poetics of Novels* (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 1999). Other film books include: *Aspects of the Screenplay* (Heinemann, 2001); *Character & Conflict: Cornerstones of Screenwriting* (Heinemann, 2004); and *I Read It at the Movies: Screen Adaptation* (Heinemann, 2006). A fourth book titled, *The Scene and How to Write It* is slated for publication by Focus Press in 2010. From 2005-2007 he was a judge on the Fulbright Commissions Panel for Creative Writing from 2005-2007. In spring, 2002, he was honored as a Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Pitzer College, Claremont, CA and was a featured speaker at the Hugh C. Hyde Living Writers Series at San Diego State University in October, 2003. In 2005, he was a guest professor of Creative Writing-Fiction at Pomona College, Claremont, CA and was invited to return in Spring, 2006. In June 2005, he was invited to teach at the 65th Annual Indiana University Writers Conference in Bloomington. In November, 2008, he has been invited by the Museum of Latin American Art, Buenos Aires, to participate in the 1st Annual International Literary Festival there.

A member of CILECT and other film organizations, he is a practicing screenwriter and has been awarded for his work by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; the Writers Guild of America, East; the Screenwriters Forum (University of Wisconsin); and the Sundance Institute. He has written over twenty screenplays and teleplays and his adaptation and co-production of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "*An Author's Mother*" won awards from the Scottish Association of Filmmakers, the London International Film & Video Festival, and the Festival Internacional de Video do Algarve, Portugal. He has taught or conducted screenwriting seminars and workshops throughout Latin America, Europe, and the United Kingdom as well as the United States including stints at: the Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba [the school founded by García Márquez]; the

Goethe Institute, Santiago, Chile (with Antonio Skármeta [author of *Il Postino*]); with both SICA, the Cinematographer's Union of Argentina, and Proyecto Culturales in Buenos Aires; at the National Film School of Denmark, Copenhagen [with Mogens Rukov (screenwriter of *Celebration*)]; the University of Art and Design, Helsinki, Finland; the Grimme Akademie, Cologne; the Flemish Film Academy, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium; PILOTS, Barcelona, Spain; Edinburgh University, Scotland; the University of Belgrano, Buenos Aires; the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK; Columbia College, Chicago; Independent Features North, Minneapolis; Western Washington University, Bellingham; Elmira College, Elmira, NY; Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA; University of Tennessee, Knoxville; and Paris Writers Workshop, Paris. For four years, he was a regular visiting adjunct professor of screenwriting at the Hamburg Media School, Hamburg, Germany.

In May, 2006, he was invited by the United States Embassy, Berlin to speak on screenwriting and to conduct screenwriting lectures at a number of German universities. In August, 2006 he gave some lectures at UNIACC in Santiago, Chile and returned there in August, 2007. PEN asked him to be the lead judge for the 2006 Best Original Screenplay Award. In addition, he has been invited to conduct screenwriting lectures at the John Huston School of Film and Digital Media, Galway, Ireland as well as at the Baltic Film School, Tallinn University, Estonia, UIAH, Helsinki, Finland, Black Coffee Films, Mumbai, India. In August, 2008 he was invited to teach at ARCOS Film School in Santiago, Chile at the invitation of the United States Embassy, Santiago, Chile and gave talks in Buenos Aires at the invitation of the United States Embassy, Buenos Aires. In September, he was invited by UNIACC Film School, Santiago, to participate in a major screenwriting conference sponsored by IBERMEDIA.